



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 1941.

EXPEDITION TO STUDY FUR SEAL HERD AT SEA

Exploring the foundations of a fur business that nets the United States Government more than \$200,000 a year, naturalists of the Fish and Wildlife Service are organizing an expedition to study the migration routes and food habits of the Alaska fur seal herd that has its breeding grounds on the Pribilof Islands in Bering Sea.

Special studies have recently been made of conditions on the Islands, according to a Service report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, and a vessel is now being equipped for use of scientists in following the herd to sea on its fall migration.

Recommended by the Department of State and authorized by a special Congressional appropriation, the investigations have been planned to obtain additional data needed in negotiations for international protection of the fur seals while they are at sea.

Under the fur seal convention of 1911, it was pointed out, the killing, capturing, or pursuing of the animals at sea has been prohibited by the United States, Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union. In October 1940 Japan, in accordance with a provision of the convention, gave notice of its abrogation but stated that it was prepared to conclude a new agreement.

With the protection afforded by the 1911 convention, the herd has increased from about 132,000 in 1910 to more than 2,000,000 and Canada and Japan have shared in profits from pelts taken under Government management on the Pribilof Islands. More than 65,000 pelts were taken in 1940.